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ABSTRACT

Student attitudes toward instructional strategies affect their interest in the subject and may raise or lower motivation. A pilot study assessed students' attitudes toward 27 different strategies frequently used for reading instruction. Subjects, 28 second-grade students, completed a Likert-type rating scale with faces instead of numbers to reflect student attitudes about various reading activities. Results suggested that for the class as a whole the preferred activities were: reading a story; practicing reading at the computer; and acting out a story. The lowest ranked activities were: practicing with word cards; meeting in a reading circle; and marking a page in the practice workbook. Such results give the classroom teacher the opportunity to make some instructional adjustments. (The questionnaire is included.) (Author/SR)

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Student Attitude Toward Selected Instructional Strategies

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Running head: INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Abstract

Student attitude toward instructional strategies affects their interest in the subject and may raise or lower motivation. The authors designed an inventory to identify the individual student's attitude toward twenty-seven different strategies frequently used for reading instruction. Results from the pilot project suggest that for the class as a whole the preferred activities are reading a story, practicing reading at the computer, and acting out a story. The lowest ranked activities were practicing with word cards, meeting in a reading circle, and marking a page in the practice workbook. The results from this inventory gave the classroom teacher the opportunity to make some instructional adjustments.

Student Attitude Toward Selected

Instructional Strategies

Students enjoy some instructional strategies more than others. Although the socially gregarious may prefer reading a play out loud, the more solitary students may prefer a quiet "book nook" where they read and reflect alone. Teachers need specific information on instructional attitudes of students as they strive to increase the level of affective behavior in reading.

Motivating students to read more and better books and stories is a constant goal of classroom teachers. Therefore, teachers may give "Snoopy" interest inventories to determine which topics students prefer to read such as horses, airplanes, or athletes. Or they may give attitude inventories to pinpoint those students who are especially resistant to reading and list recess as their favorite school subject. The authors propose a third type of inventory to determine which instructional strategies students truly enjoy and which ones promote a negative attitude toward reading.

Instructional Influence on Attitude

The characteristics of positive affective reading behavior are explained by Darling (1967) who relates the affective dimension of reading to Krathwohl's taxonomy of receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterization. He describes internalization of the reading act as the process of absorbing reading as an integral part of the individual. The students learn to value reading to the extent to which it satisfies their personal needs, both affective and cognitive. When the

reading experience promotes anxiety due to fear of embarrassment or fear of failure, the students develop negative attitudes. When reading does not answer personal questions or satisfy their purposes, they do not value the skill. They need not always find reading fun, but they must find reading satisfying.

If instructional strategies restrain the learners in their willingness to receive and pay attention to the reading lesson, then one can see that higher levels such as satisfaction of response may never be reached. Awareness of instructional preferences will allow the teacher to provide a program of study which will lead to satisfaction of the primary goals of proficiency and pleasure in reading.

Teachers are conscious of the cognitive needs relevant to student reading aptitude. But the measures of affective needs focus primarily on subject areas like sports or romance. Attitudes toward instructional strategies in reading need to be more closely defined.

Artley (1973) approached this concept when he probed education majors with open-ended questions regarding teacher influence on attitude during elementary school years. Many students did not recall anything about reading teachers or instruction. Favorable comments included teachers reading to the class, free reading time for materials of the student's own choice, variety in activities in the daily lessons, availability (easy access) of enjoyable reading materials, rewards (Good students love them. Poor students hated them.), personal attention, and enthusiastic teacher personality. Artley's students had negative memories for a heavy balance of "purposeless" skill drills (growth in reading skills versus growth

through reading), irrelevant practice materials and workbooks (busy work), book reports on reading done outside the required basal, and oral (round-robin) reading. They preferred "opportunity to react, respond or be stimulated by others in a group."

Developing the Instrument

The first step in developing the instrument was the collection of instructional strategies used by teachers in reading classes. The authors listed their ideas from their own experiences teaching reading. Then they asked teachers who were graduate students for ideas. Basal readers were scanned for additional ideas. A list was typed, stated from the students' perspective (When I read out loud in the reading circle, I feel . . .), and shared with other professors and teachers for comments. The final copy was submitted to the educational statistician for criticism and corrections.

A Likert-type rating scale composed of happy faces was added for response since the instrument would primarily be used with first, second, and third grade students during the pilot project. We felt the faces would more accurately reflect their attitudes. The scale was converted to numbers (5-1) for analysis with 5 representing and 1 representing . The teacher can simply look at the instrument to see the students' preferences.

The Inventory

The inventory included the following items:

1. When I read out loud from my reading book, I feel
2. When my teacher reads me a story, I feel
3. When I sit at my desk and read silently, I feel
4. When I read a story, I feel
5. When I read a poem, I feel
6. When I read a book about people, I feel
7. When I read a book about things, I feel
8. When I listen to a tape recording while I look at the pictures, I feel
9. When I mark a page in my practice workbook, I feel
10. When I color a reading activity sheet, I feel
11. When I listen to other student tell about books they read, I feel
12. When the teacher leads a lesson about how to read, I feel
13. When we meet in a reading circle, I feel
14. When we write and read our own story, I feel
15. When I draw a picture about a story, I feel
16. When I tell about something I read, I feel
17. When I make a picture dictionary, I feel
18. When I play a reading game with another student, I feel

19. When I practice with word cards, I feel
20. When a student and I read to each other, I feel
21. When a group of us read out loud together, I feel
22. When the teacher asks me a question about a story we read, I feel
23. When I ask a question about a story we read, I feel
24. When we put on a play or act out a story we read, I feel
25. When we have a test about reading, I feel
26. When I practice reading at the computer, I feel
27. When I read stories on the computer, I feel

Administering the Test

A teacher at the Memphis State University Campus School (Memphis City School District) agreed to let the researchers try the instrument with her students. Students in the Materials and Methods in Reading undergraduate class at Memphis State University administered the test as one of their class experiences. Both the teacher and the college students discussed the intent and the value of the instrument with the authors.

The subjects were twenty-eight second grade students in a self-contained classroom. Fourteen were girls and fourteen were boys. The basis of classroom instruction in reading is a popular basal reader program. For overall validity, the teacher ranked the students on general reading interest on a ten point scale and

reported the students' reading scores on the California Achievement Test for the year.

Although individualized administration is not necessary, the researcher decided to administer each test individually in order to assure thorough understanding of test items by subjects. College students enrolled in a developmental reading class, studied testing procedures for general classroom use and were trained to administer this inventory. The college students rehearsed the administration in class with a partner and under instructor supervision. The instructor encouraged them to rehearse more after class so they would be comfortable with the procedure when they visited the elementary classroom. During the test administration the college student explained what the faces meant and how to mark one with an X. The college student and the subject read the directions softly together followed by reading the first item together after which the subject indicated the preferred response and marked the appropriate face. If the subject appeared able to continue alone, s/he did so. If not, the college student continued to read each item softly with the subject.

Results of the Study

Correlations between the inventory and teacher rankings of students on general reading interest, between the inventory and the standardized reading score, and between the teacher ranking and the reading score were all significant at the 0.05 level. The inventory provides a fair picture of student attitudes.

As might be expected, class preferences were for pleasure reading over instructional reading. The activity categories, ranked from best to least liked, were pleasure (independent), pleasure (group), instruction (group), and instruction (independent).

The top ranked activities, in order, were reading a story, practicing reading at the computer, acting out a story we read, coloring a reading activity sheet, listening to a tape recorder while looking at pictures, and reading stories on the computer. The lowest ranked activities, starting with the least liked, were practicing with word cards, meeting in a reading circle, marking a page in my practice workbook, reading silently at my desk, and having a reading test.

Considering the frequent use of word cards, the reading circle, and workbooks, it is discouraging to find them ranked as least liked. The explanation for this ranking may vary from boredom with strategies to fear of public censure. The teacher may wish to vary word card practice through use of computer or Language Master activities or through games which match word cards or cards an pictures or broken card puzzles. Reading circle time may reduce the use of basal reader questions and increase the use of predictive and creative open-ended questions which encourage student opinions and reduce fear of failure. Circle skills instruction may reduce the use of flipcharts and increase the use of brightly colored sentence strips, response sticks, songs, rhymes, and other manipulatives an vocalizations.

Although analyses of the inventory for the entire class are helpful for overall teacher planning, initial interest of teachers focused on responses of individual students. For example, one boy identified his favorite activities as reading silently at my desk, reading a book about people, coloring an activity sheet, telling about something I read, playing a reading game with another student, acting out a story, and practicing at the computer. His strongest dislikes included reading a poem, meeting in the reading circle, making a picture dictionary, practicing with word cards, and taking a reading test. The items on which he varies dramatically from the class as a whole are preference for reading silently at desk and telling about something he read. This student may be encouraged to continue these behaviors since they are quite productive while students who dislike these are provided other types of reading and thinking activities. His dislikes tend to correspond to class rankings, especially the reading circle and word cards.

Conclusions

Teachers appreciate new and creative activities for classroom instruction. Conference presentations like the delightful strategies demonstrated by the McCrackens and journal sections such as The Reading Teacher's "The Classroom Reading Teacher" are always popular. The following resources are also recommended.

The IRA Catalog of Publications (1987) lists three booklets of ideas which teachers will find useful to promote student interest/attitude in reading instruction. Spiegel's Reading for Pleasure: Guidelines describes motivational techniques for

teachers. Roser and Frith's (Eds.) Children's Choices: Teaching with Books Children Like offers suggestions for effective classroom use of children's favorite books. Alexander and Filler in Attitudes and Reading recommend instructional strategies and organizational patterns which encourage positive attitudes. These materials may be ordered from the IRA Office, 800 Barksdale Road, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, Delaware, 19714.

Because attitudes vary among students, it is important that attitudes about reading be checked and a plan be implemented to strive for positive feelings. Briggs (1987) stated that motivation, comprehension, and acceptance require positiveness. He further noted that the teacher's primary role is that of searching for strategies and materials to match student needs and interests.

This inventory provides an opportunity for teachers to analyze student responses to the classroom. It can also serve to help adapt some of the more popular strategies to teacher's personal class management style.

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